

on other jobs to obtain enough money to pay taxes and interest and, incidentally, live and support my family. This year has been worse than all the previous ones, and I find myself "broke," taxes unpaid, and about \$100 in the bank. Prior to the last eleven years I was able to make a living on the place. Now I can't and I am ill. I am in a state of exhaustion and unable to work to speak of, all details of which I will omit as all I wish to find out is if there is any way whereby one can obtain a complete examination in the hospital at little cost, as I feel there must be something wrong with me or I would not feel as I do and, while not a pauper, I might as well be, as I have no money. I do not wish to impose on anyone, and I've always paid my way. At present I am desperate with worry, and local doctors that I have seen can find nothing wrong. I thought perhaps there was a clinic I could go to at some modest charge. I hate to bother you and hope you pardon my writing at length. I belong to the Intercoast Hospitalization, Inc., but they do not cover examination. I can hardly keep my dues up in that at present.

Most respectfully,

M. SHARPE.

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(COPY)

October 18, 1939.

Mr. M. Sharpe  
Vacaville, California

Dear Mr. Sharpe:

I have read your letter of October 15 with great interest. It may be that we can be of some help to you.

May I suggest that you call on some physician whom you regard as your family doctor and show him this letter and ask if he will be good enough to recommend you to us. We could then accept you, make a study, and report our findings to the doctor, who no doubt would be willing to carry on any treatment suggested.

We are enclosing a leaflet which will give you some idea of eligibility. There would of course be no physician's or surgeon's fee, if you came to the clinic. You would be expected, however, to meet our cost for such things as x-rays or clinical laboratory procedures. We ought to have two or three days to study your disorder. We can recommend rooms across the street, where you can stay for about \$1 a day, and there is a cafeteria on the campus.

If you come to San Francisco, please present this letter, as well as that from your doctor, to the information desk immediately on your arrival, which should be as nearly 8:30 in the morning as possible.

Yours very truly,

OUT-PATIENT DEPARTMENT.

W. E. Carter, M. D., *Director*.

**Subject: Premarital examinations.**

(COPY)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

October 4, 1939.

To the Editor:—Enclosed is a copy of a letter mailed today to Doctor Dukes at his Oakland address.

Very truly yours,

W. M. DICKIE, M. D.,  
*Director, California State Department of  
Public Health.*

(COPY)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

San Francisco, October 3, 1939.

Charles A. Dukes, M. D.  
President, California Medical Association  
450 Sutter Street  
San Francisco, California

My dear Doctor Dukes:

I believe you will be interested in knowing information we have concerning the administration of the law requiring premarital examinations and blood tests for syphilis.

There exists a great deal of public confusion concerning fees and there seems to be no uniformity among physicians as to what charges should be made. Fees are reported to range from \$1.50, when the blood is sent to the free laboratories of state and local health departments, to as high as \$16 a person.

Persons wishing to be married have stated to marriage license clerks and to newspaper reporters that they want to go to a private physician, but that they want to know definitely what charge will be made for the examination and blood test. This is further borne out by the experience in free clinics which, in most centers of the state, have been thrown open to the public by local health officers. Not all people who come to the clinics ask for a free premarital examination and test. Persons whose means are limited ask for the names of private physicians who will make a charge which they can afford to pay. In a few cases, clinics are able to supply such a list by using the names of physicians who have signified their willingness to treat part-pay patients in private practice if free drugs are furnished by the state.

I realize that it is the policy of the Association to leave the question of fees for medical services to the individual physician. Nevertheless, there is a very definite desire among applicants for information as to probable fee schedules. Unless steps are taken to relieve the uncertainty in the public mind concerning charges, it is quite possible that unscrupulous practitioners will open combined offices and laboratories near license bureaus and make a racket of the premarital examinations and tests by offering them for a low fee.

Of course, the State Department of Public Health is very anxious that the highest type of medical service be made available, particularly for persons who are found to be infected and in need of treatment. It is also our desire that there be no unnecessary obstacles to marriage.

It is our opinion that the majority of reputable physicians are charging only nominal fees for the examination, but we believe the public is entitled to have access to the names of such physicians and to know in advance how much will be charged.

Therefore, I suggest that in the interest of the public welfare, the California Medical Association take the lead by recommending a basic fee for premarital examinations and tests to local medical societies. Local societies could then furnish county clerks and free clinics with a list of physicians who were willing to make the examination and test for a fixed, reasonable fee. Such action would result in the elimination of the present confusion and the administration of the premarital law without hardship to either the public or the medical profession.

313 State Building.

Very truly yours,

W. M. DICKIE, M. D.,  
*Director, California State Department of  
Public Health.*